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ABSTRACT

This publication documents resolutions of the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association (APA) related to children, youth, and families. It includes resolutions on: (1) children's mental health as indicated in Public Law No. 89-97; (2) the national commitment to early child development; (3) corporal punishment in institutions where children are cared for or educated; (4) sex discrimination in child custody issues; (5) the International Year of the Child; (6) psychological abuse of children and youth; (7) television violence and children, including encouraging parental monitoring of children's viewing, reducing televised violence, and supporting relevant research; (8) the establishment of an APA Committee on Children, Youth, and Families; (9) motor vehicle trauma to infants and children; (10) violence against children by governments; (11) the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; (12) an initiative to develop and implement a national strategy for preventing and treating child abuse and neglect; (13) the use of anatomically detailed dolls in forensic evaluations; (14) lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths in the schools; (15) the United Nations International Year of the Family, 1994; (16) firearm safety and youth, including nationwide licensing, reduction of access, and school-based educational programs; (17) violence in mass media, including dissemination of research results, endorsement of warning labels for violent material, revision of the Film Rating System, and reduction of media violence; (18) psychological needs of children exposed to disasters; and (19) access to sexuality education. (Contains 51 references.) (KDFB)

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Policy Statements on Children, Youth, and Families

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Mental Health of Children

The Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association (Council) adopted the following resolution:

The Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association is gratified by the passage of Pub. L. No. 89-97 calling for one or more studies of the mental health of children. It believes that many grave national problems, such as crime and delinquency, mental disorders, and social incompetence among adults, may be most effectively dealt with by early identification and intervention in years of childhood and adolescence. It sees the problem as involving a wide range of social agencies—educational, medical, correctional, and welfare—as well as a number of lay groups concerned with human development. It applauds the initiative of the American Psychiatric Association in establishing the Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children. It approves the participation of the American Psychological Association on the Commission on the basis of equal representation on its governing body of the range of organizations that have been actively concerned with the mental health of children (Newman, 1965).

Child Development

The Council adopted the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association call upon President Nixon to reaffirm the national commitment to early child development, as stated by him in April 1969, and to implement the resolution of the White House Conference on Children calling for the permanent establishment of the Office of Child Development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association call upon the President and members of Congress to support programs of comprehensive child development (McKeachie, 1972).

Corporal Punishment

Council adopted the following resolution on corporal punishment:

WHEREAS, the resort to corporal punishment tends to reduce the likelihood of employing more effective, humane, and creative ways of interacting with children;

WHEREAS, it is evident that socially acceptable goals of education, training, and socialization can be achieved without the use of physical violence against children, and that children so raised, grow to moral and competent adulthood;

WHEREAS, *corporal* punishment intended to influence "undesirable responses" may create in the child the impression that he or she is an "undesirable person"; and an impression that lowers self-esteem and may have chronic consequences;

WHEREAS, research has shown that to a considerable extent children learn by imitating the behavior of adults, especially those they are dependent upon; and the use of *corporal* punishment by adults having authority over children is likely to train children to use physical violence to control behavior rather than rational persuasion, education, and intelligent forms of both positive and negative reinforcement;

WHEREAS, research has shown that the effective use of punishment in eliminating undesirable behavior requires precision in timing, duration, intensity, and specificity, as well as considerable sophistication in controlling a variety of relevant environmental and cognitive factors, such that punishment administered in institutional settings, without attention to all these factors, is likely to instill hostility, rage, and a sense of powerlessness without reducing the undesirable behavior;

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THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association opposes the use of *corporal* punishment in schools, juvenile facilities, child care nurseries, and all other institutions, public or private, where children are cared for or educated (Conger, 1975).

Child Custody

Council adopted the following resolution on child custody:

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Council of Representatives recognizes officially and makes suitable promulgation of the fact that it is scientifically and psychologically baseless, as well as in violation of human rights, to discriminate against men because of their sex in assignment of children's custody, in adoption, in the staffing of child-care services, in personnel practices providing for parental leave in relation to childbirth and emergencies involving children, and in similar laws and practices. Further, it is recommended that suitable promulgation of the resolution . . . include specific mailing to the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court in his capacity as the chief administrative officer of the Federal court system, to presiding judges of the various state court systems, to the Attorney General of the United States, and to the Attorneys General of the states (Conger, 1977).

International Year of the Child

[Council] voted strongly to endorse the United Nations International Year of the Child and actively to encourage the establishment of a National Commission for the International Year of the Child; further, the Council instructs APA's Representatives to the IUPS [International Union of Psychological Science] to request that the 1978 Assembly of the IUPS endorse and
encourage its member societies to support to the fullest extent possible the objectives and activities associated with the International Year of the Child (Conger, 1978).

Psychological Abuse of Children and Youth

Council adopted the following resolution:

The recent International Conference on Psychological Abuse of Children and Youth has presented information that the incidence and prevalence of such acts are so high that concerned individuals need to organize to coordinate necessary efforts in definition, prevention, treatment, and research. The American Psychological Association recognizes the importance of this issue, and to this end invites relevant boards, committees, and divisions/states to explore the major issues of definition, prevention, treatment, and research, and to prepare brief position papers with supporting data, to be forwarded to the BSERP [Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology] for consolidation and submission

Television Violence and Children

WHEREAS, the great majority of research studies have found a relationship between televised violence and behaving aggressively; and

WHEREAS, the conclusion drawn on the basis of 25 years of research and a sizable number of experimental and field investigations (NIMH, 1972, 1982) is that viewing televised violence may lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behavior, particularly in children; and

WHEREAS, many children's programs contain some form of violence;

BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association (1) encourages parents to monitor and to control television viewing by children; (2) requests industry representatives to take a responsible attitude in reducing direct imitatable violence on "real-life" fictional children's programming or violent incidents on cartoons, and in providing more programming for children designed to mitigate possible effects of television violence, consistent with the guarantees of the First Amendment; and (3) urges industry, government, and private foundations to support relevant research activities aimed at the amelioration of the effects of high levels of televised violence on children's attitudes and behaviors (Abeles, 1985).

Committee on Children, Youth, and Families

There shall be a Committee on Children, Youth, and Families which shall concern itself with furthering the major purpose of the APA—"to advance psychology as a science and a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare"—by ensuring that children, youth, and families receive the full attention of the Association in order that all human resources are actualized. It should function as a catalyst, interacting with and making recommendations to the various parts of the APA's governing structure, to the APA's membership, and to relevant divisions and other groups. Specifically, the Committee will pursue the following goals: (a) identify and disseminate information concerning the psychological status of children, youth, and families for psychologists, other professionals, policymakers, and the public; (b) offer consultation to relevant APA boards and committees that are responsible for the educational standards for psychologists who conduct research and provide services for children, youth, and families; (c) encourage psychological research on the factors that promote or inhibit the development of individual and family competence; (d) contribute to the formulation and support of policies that facilitate the optimal development of children and youth within families; and (e) designate priorities for APA involvement in the issues affecting children, youth, and families, including issues related to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability.

The Committee shall consist of six members who are elected for staggered terms of three years. It shall report to Council through the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest (DeLeon, 1994).

Motor Vehicle Trauma

WHEREAS, motor vehicle trauma causes damage to every system of the human body and every psychological and social system involving the victims of motor vehicle trauma; and

WHEREAS, the great majority of these deaths, traumatic injuries, psychosocial, and financial losses could be prevented or significantly reduced through the application of available or potentially available but neglected countermeasures; and

WHEREAS, we as behavioral scientists and practitioners have special expertise that can be applied to the prevention of motor vehicle trauma and its sequelae; and

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association herein declares that motor vehicle trauma prevention is rightfully a major concern of behavioral scientists and practitioners;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association supports the American Academy of Pediatrics in its "The First Ride" project to see that all newborn babies ride properly protected in infant car safety seats, and in its general program to prevent/reduce infant and childhood motor vehicle trauma; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the APA will continue to work with the American Academy of Pediatrics and other groups to promote the prevention/reduction of motor vehicle trauma and its sequelae for Americans of all ages (Fox, 1987).

Resolution on Violence Against Children by Governments

WHEREAS, violence toward children which is encouraged or tolerated by governments of any country represents an affront to civilized society and a social concern of all responsible people;

WHEREAS, psychologists cannot in good conscience remain silent in the face of such abuse;

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association is also obligated to support our colleagues in other countries when they courageously speak out against such abuses;

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association has in the past spoken out against the government sponsored violations of children's rights (e.g., the imprisonment of Black children in South Africa);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association will, as a matter of policy, consider, upon documentation of such abuses of children's rights, resolutions protesting such abuses and expressing solidarity with our colleagues who protest such abuses within their own country (Fox, 1989).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

WHEREAS, all children across the world are born with the right to human dignity and the potential to realize their full capacities;

WHEREAS, the future of the world is directly linked to the well-being of today's children;

WHEREAS, millions of children still live in conditions of poverty, abuse, neglect, and exploitation;

WHEREAS, comprehensive individual development (including psychological development) can take place only under conditions that protect one's human rights;

WHEREAS, the United Nations, working for 10 years with the cooperation of individuals, organizations, and governments; and having produced a Convention on the Rights of the Child, will vote on whether to pass this first international human rights treaty on behalf of children in November 1989;

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association, its Officers, and its governing Council share concern for the welfare of children; and

WHEREAS, while recognizing that some of the language of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child could be misconstrued and thereby used to limit the freedom of reproductive choice supported by APA, APA supports the U.N. Convention's recognition of cultural diversity within the context of an overriding concern for children's welfare;

THEREFORE, The Council of Representatives endorses the principles and spirit of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child provided that the language is not used to limit freedom of reproductive choice as supported by the APA (Fox, 1990).

Psychological Issues Related to Child Abuse and Neglect

WHEREAS, the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect has declared the problem of child maltreatment to have reached the level of a national emergency;

WHEREAS, reports of child maltreatment have arisen faster than the child protective system's capacity to provide adequate and timely investigations in response to such reports in some states;

WHEREAS, child abuse (including physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse) and neglect communicate disrespect for the dignity of children as persons;

WHEREAS, such degrading practices often impede the development of children and foster psychological harm;

WHEREAS, abused and neglected children often are not provided with treatment that may alleviate such harm and that may prevent further ill effects;

WHEREAS, substantial gaps remain in knowledge about (a) the precipitants and etiology of child abuse and neglect, (b) the factors affecting legal and clinical decisionmaking in such cases, and (c) the efficacy of various programs to prevent child maltreatment, alleviate its effects, build positive relationships in families in which child maltreatment has occurred, or ensure the safety of children in families where maltreatment is known or suspected to have occurred;

WHEREAS, preventive interventions of documented efficacy (e.g., home visitation services during infancy) seldom have been instituted on a broad scale;

WHEREAS, basic knowledge about the phenomenon of child maltreatment (e.g., the relationship between neighborhood stability and maltreatment rates) rarely has been systematically applied to the development and implementation of comprehensive preventive and therapeutic services for families in which child abuse or neglect is at risk of occurring or has already occurred;

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WHEREAS, policies intended to promote child protection (e.g., laws to permit special procedures in criminal child abuse cases) seldom have been evaluated;

WHEREAS, the complex conflicts of interests and values present in many child maltreatment cases create needs for special training of psychologists and other professionals involved in such cases;

WHEREAS, the development and application of knowledge about child maltreatment have been impeded by critical shortages of qualified researchers and mental health practitioners specializing in work on the topic;

WHEREAS, the federal government generally has failed to provide adequate leadership in the development and application of knowledge about child abuse and neglect;

WHEREAS, state and federal governments sometimes have failed to ensure the safety even of those children who are in the care of the state;

WHEREAS, psychologists have ethical duties to promote human dignity and welfare;

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association (APA) has expressed its support for the principles embodied in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child; and

WHEREAS, the APA Board of Directors has accepted the report of its Ad Hoc Committee on Child Abuse Policy, which encouraged the development of specific policies and actions to assist psychologists in their work with maltreated children and their families;

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Council of Representatives of the APA finds and declares that the development of a national strategy to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect is a matter of the highest urgency, and that psychologists can and should contribute substantially to such a national effort.

THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED, That the Council of Representatives directs the Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer to undertake an immediate initiative to apply the science and profession of psychology to the development and implementation of a national strategy for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

(1) Such an initiative shall be of high priority and shall include but not be limited to:

(a) The establishment of a staff working group, including representatives of each Directorate and the Public Affairs Office, for the purposes of

(i) dissemination of psychological knowledge about child abuse and neglect to the public, the state associations, and the divisions;

(ii) promotion of the enactment of public policies consistent with this resolution; and

(iii) coordination with the associations of scientists and professionals in other disciplines concerned with the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect;

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(b) The establishment of task forces of authorities in the field in order

(i) to review scientific knowledge about prevention of child abuse and neglect, treatment of abused and neglected children, treatment of perpetrators of child abuse and neglect, and effects of federal and state law related to child abuse and neglect;

(ii) to identify critical gaps in knowledge about child maltreatment; and

(iii) to suggest initiatives to enhance the state of knowledge;

(c) A public relations campaign to communicate the results of such scholarly reviews to the general public and federal and state policymakers;

(d) A review by the Committee for the Protection of Human Participants in Research (CPHPR), in collaboration with relevant divisions and leading individual scientists, of legal, political, and ethical barriers to research on child maltreatment, and development of recommendations by CPHPR as needed to removesuch barriers;

(e) A review by the Board of Scientific Affairs and the Board of Educational Affairs, in collaboration with relevant divisions, of human resource needs in psychological research on child abuse and neglect, and development of recommendations for fulfillment of unmet needs;

(f) Upon the completion of the work of each task force established pursuant to Section 1(b) of this act, the establishment of a task force to consider the "state of the art" in the relevant area of practice, to identify priorities for development or reform of programs, and, as needed, to develop recommendations for development or reform of graduate and continuing education programs;

(g) A review by the Board of Professional Affairs and the Board of Educational Affairs, in collabortion with relevant divisions, of human resource needs in psychological practice on child abuse and neglect, and development of recommendations for fulfillment of unmet needs;

(h) Public education and lobbying to promote the development of federal, state, and private initiatives for
research and programs consistent with the priorities identified through activities conducted pursuant to Sections 1(b), 1(d), 1(e), 1(f), and 1(g) of this act; and

(i) No later than 1992, a miniconvention on child abuse and neglect at the annual meeting of the Association, to be planned and implemented by the Board of Convention Affairs in collaboration with relevant divisions.

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(2) In all activities conducted pursuant to this act, due consideration shall be given to cultural differences and the interests of ethnic-minority children and families.

(3) In all activities conducted pursuant to this act, due consideration shall be given to the relation of child maltreatment to other social issues, including the status of children, the status of women,the status of ethnic minorities, the needs of children with handicapping conditions and disabilities, the effects of poverty, the welfare of families, and cultural beliefs about violence.

(4) The Board of Directors may delegate the establishment of a given task force to fulfill a requirement of Section 1(b) or 1(f) to one or more divisions with expertise on the topic. Such delegation shall occur only with approval of the division(s) involved. In any such collaboration, the Association and the division(s) may share the costs incurred by any task force so established.

(5) Notwithstanding the provisions in Section 4, the divisions and the state associations are encouraged to establish their own initiatives to reduce the prevalence of child maltreatment and to ameliorate its effects. The Office of Divisional Affairs and the Office of State Association Affairs shall assist in the development of such initiatives.

(6) For activities conducted pursuant to this act in 1990, $12,000 is hereby appropriated from the Council of Representatives contingency fund. The Finance Committee and the Board of Directors shall include funds for such activities in annual budgets of the Association at least until 1995.

(7) The Board of Directors shall establish timelines for completion of activities pursuant to this act.

(8) The Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer shall report to the Council of Representatives at each meeting about progress made in the implementation of this act.

(9) The Board of Directors shall appoint a five (5) member Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee comprised of individuals representing the interests and concerns of the science, practice, education, and public interest communities. The primary purpose of the Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee will be to develop an integrated and cohesive plan to guide APA policy and activities related to child abuse and neglect. To this end, the Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee will be charged with the oversight, coordination, and implementation of the recommendations from the report of the Board of Directors' Ad Hoc Committee on Child Abuse Policy (presented to the Board of Directors 12/1/89) and the activities outlined in this resolution. The Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee will be staffed out of the APA Executive Office and will report

(10) Nothing in this act shall preclude the development of projects to provide guidance to professional psychologists about ethical, legal, and clinical considerations in practice related to child abuse and neglect or to recommend public policy regulating such practice (Fox, 1991).

The Use of Anatomically Detailed Dolls in Forensic Evaluations

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Council voted to approve the following statement:

Anatomically detailed dolls are widely used in conducting assessments in cases of alleged child sexual abuse. In general, such dolls may be useful in helping children to communicate when their language skills or emotional concerns preclude direct verbal responses. These dolls may also be useful communication props to help older children who may have difficulty expressing themselves verbally on sexual topics.

These dolls are available from a variety of vendors and are readily sold to anyone who wishes to purchase them. The design, detail, and nature of the dolls vary considerably across manufacturers. Neither the dolls nor their use are standardized or accompanied by normative data. There are currently no uniform standards for conducting interviews with the dolls.

We urge continued research in quest of more and better data regarding the stimulus properties of such dolls and normative behavior of abused and nonabused children.

Nevertheless, doll-centered assessment of children when used as part of a psychological evaluation and interpreted by experienced and competent examiners, may be the best available practical solution for a pressing and frequent clinical problem (i.e., investigation of the possible presence of sexual abuse of a child).

Therefore, in conformity with the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists*, psychologists who undertake the doll-centered assessment of sexual abuse should be competent to use these techniques. We recommend that psychologists document by videotape (whenever possible), audiotape, or in writing the procedures they use for each administration. Psychologists should be prepared to provide clinical and empirical rationale (i.e., published studies, clinical experience, etc.) for procedures employed and for interpretation of results derived from using anatomically detailed dolls (Fox, 1991).

Resolution on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youths in the Schools

WHEREAS, society's attitudes, behaviors, and tendency to render lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons invisible permeate all societal institutions including the family and school system (Gonsiorek, 1988; Hetrick & Martin, 1988; Ponse, 1978; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992);

WHEREAS, it is a presumption that all persons, including those who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual, have the right to equal opportunity within all public educational institutions;

WHEREAS, current literature suggests that some youths are aware of their status as lesbian, gay, or bisexual persons by early adolescence (Remafedi, 1987; Savin-Williams, 1990; Slater, 1988; Troiden, 1988);

WHEREAS, many lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths, and youths perceived to belong to these groups, face harassment and physical violence in school environments (Freiberg, 1987; Hetrick & Martin, 1988; Remafedi, 1987; Schaecher, 1988; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992; Whitlock, 1988);

WHEREAS, many lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths are at risk for lowered self-esteem and for engaging in self-injurious behaviors, including suicide (Gibson, 1989; Gonsiorek, 1988; Harry, 1989; Hetrick & Martin, 1988; Savin-Williams, 1990);

WHEREAS, gay male and bisexual youths are at an increased risk of HIV infection (Savin-Williams, 1992);

WHEREAS, lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths of color have additional challenges to their self-esteem as a result of the negative consequences of discrimination based on both sexual orientation and ethnic/racial minority status (Garnets & Kimmel 1991);

WHEREAS, lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths with physical or mental disabilities are at increased risk due to the negative consequence of societal prejudice toward persons with mental or physical disabilities (Hingsburger & Griffiths, 1986; Pendler & Hingsburger, 1991);

WHEREAS, lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths who are poor or working class may face additional risks (Gordon, Schroeder, & Abrams, 1990);

WHEREAS, psychologists affect policies and practices within educational environments;

WHEREAS, psychology promotes the individual's development of personal identity including the sexual orientation of all individuals;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists shall take a leadership role in promoting societal and familial attitudes and behaviors that affirm the dignity and rights, within the educational environments, of all lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths, including those with physical or mental disabilities, and from all ethnic/racial background and classes;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists support providing a safe and secure educational atmosphere in which all youths, including lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths, may obtain an education free from discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse, and which promotes an understanding and acceptance of self;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists encourage psychologists to develop and evaluate interventions that foster nondiscriminatory environments, lower risk for HIV infection, and decrease self-injurious behaviors in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists shall advocate efforts to ensure the funding of basic and applied research on and scientific evaluations of interventions and programs designed to address the issues of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths in the schools, and programs for HIV prevention targeted at gay and bisexual youths;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists shall work with other organizations in efforts to accomplish these ends (DeLeon, 1993).

Proclamation in Support of the United Nations International Year of the Family, 1994

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WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association recognizes that the family constitutes a basic unit of society; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 1994 as the International Year of the Family (IYF) with its theme: "Family—Resources and Responsibilities in a Changing World"; and

WHEREAS, the activities for the observation of IYF will be concentrated at the local, national, regional, and international levels with primary focus at the local and national levels; and

WHEREAS, the IYF encompasses and addresses the needs of all families recognizing the diversity of families; and

WHEREAS, activities for IYF seek to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all individuals as set forth by United Nations instruments, whatever the status of each individual and the conditions within a given family; and

WHEREAS, IYF policies aim at promoting inherent strengths of families; and

WHEREAS, IYF programs support families in the discharge of their functions;

NOW, THEREFORE, The American Psychological Association does hereby resolve to join International Year of the Family and asks the Board of Convention Affairs and all Directorates of the Association to consider appropriate program initiatives for the 1994 APA convention (DeLeon, 1994).

Firearm Safety and Youth

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association deplores the increase in violence and its negative effects on children and youth who are victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and witnesses of violent incidents;

WHEREAS, the negative effects of violence extend to indirect victims whose lives are affected by losses, anxiety, and terror even if they do not have firsthand experience with violent incidents;

WHEREAS, the psychological research on factors that contribute to human aggression indicates that exposure and access to guns can result in an increased likelihood of aggression;

WHEREAS, access to firearms as well as their presence and use fosters anxieties, fears, distrust, and suspicion among people;

WHEREAS, access to and use of firearms by young people is associated with increased rates of suicide, homicide, and injury among children and youth;

WHEREAS, the presence of firearms markedly increases the probability of fatality and severe injury in interpersonal violence;

WHEREAS, access to firearms by children and youth contributes to unintentional injury and death;

WHEREAS, children's exposure to the consequences of firearm injury and death is associated with increased symptoms of fear, anxiety, depression, and stress;

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RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association:

(1) Supports nationwide licensing of firearm ownership based on attainment of legal voting age; clearance following a criminal record background check; and demonstrated skill in firearm knowledge, use, and safety;

(2) Encourages federal, state, and local governments to increase specific legal, regulatory, and enforcement efforts to reduce wide-spread, easy, and unsupervised access to firearms by children and youth;

(3) Supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of school-based programs to educate children and youth regarding the prevention of firearm violence and the reduction of both unintentional and intentional death and injury caused by firearms (DeLeon, 1995).

Violence in Mass Media

On the recommendation of the Board of Directors and the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest, Council voted to adopt the following resolution, as amended, as APA policy, replacing the 1985 resolution on television violence:

WHEREAS, the consequences of aggressive and violent behavior have brought human suffering, lost lives, and economic hardship to our society as well as an atmosphere of anxiety, fear, and mistrust;

WHEREAS, in recent years the level of violence in American society and the level of violence portrayed in television, film, and video have escalated markedly;

WHEREAS, the great majority of research studies have found a relation between viewing mass media violence and behaving aggressively;

WHEREAS, the conclusion drawn on the basis of over 30 years of research and a sizeable number of experimental and field investigations (Huston, et al., 1992; NIMH, 1982; Surgeon General, 1972) is that viewing mass media violence leads to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behavior, particularly in children, and has a long-lasting effect on behavior and personality, including criminal behavior;

WHEREAS, viewing violence desensitizes the viewer to violence, resulting in calloused attitudes regarding violence toward others and a decreased likelihood to take action on behalf of a victim when violence occurs;

WHEREAS, viewing violence increases viewers' tendencies for becoming involved with or exposing themselves to violence;

WHEREAS, viewing violence increases fear of becoming a victim of violence, with a resultant increase in self-protective behaviors and mistrust of others;

WHEREAS, many children's television programs and films contain some form of violence, and children's access to adult-oriented media violence is increasing as a result of new technological advances;

RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association:

(1) Urges psychologists to inform the television and film industry personnel who are responsible for violent programming, their commercial advertisers, legislators, and the general public that viewing violence in the media produces aggressive and violent behavior in children who are susceptible to such effects;

(2) Encourages parents and other child care providers to monitor and supervise television, video, and film viewing by children;

(3) Supports the inclusion of clear and easy-to-use warning labels for violent material in television, video, and film programs to enable viewers to make informed choices;

(4) Supports the development of technologies that empower view ers to prevent the broadcast of violent material in their homes;

(5) Supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of school-based programs to educate children and youth regarding means for critically viewing, processing, and evaluating video and film portrayals of both aggressive and prosocial behaviors;

(6) Requests the television and film industry to reduce direct violence in "real life" fictional children's programming or violent incidents in cartoons and other television or film productions, and to provide more programming designed to mitigate possible effects of television and film violence, consistent with the guarantees of the First Amendment;

(7) Urges the television and film industry to foster programming that models prosocial behaviors and seeks to resolve the problem of violence in society;

(8) Offers to the television and film industry assistance in developing programs that illustrate psychological methods to control aggressive and violent behavior, and alternative strategies for dealing with conflict and anger;

(9) Supports revision of the Film Rating System to take into account violence content that is harmful to children and youth;

(10) Urges industry, government, and private foundations to develop and implement programs to enhance the critical viewing skills of teachers, parents, and children regarding media violence and how to prevent its negative effects;

(11) Recommends that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) review, as a condition for license renewal, the programming and outreach efforts and accomplishments of television stations in helping to solve the problem of youth violence;

(12) Urges industry, government, and private foundations to support research activities aimed at the amelioration of the effects of high levels of mass media violence on children's attitudes and behavior (DeLeon, 1995).

Resolution on the Psychological Needs of Children Exposed to Disasters

WHEREAS, children are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of disasters (abrupt, disruptive public events) through their dependence on adults for psychological and physical safety and day-to-day care and their widely varying stages of development;

WHEREAS, disasters, both natural and human-made, often lead to devastating psychological effects on the populations impacted;

WHEREAS, disasters are increasing sources of human dysfunction (Hurricane Andrew, Midwest floods), as urban areas grow in population and geographic area/spread, as rural areas fall further behind in access to resources, as technology expands the potential for accidents and negative side effects (Three-Mile Island), and as the rise in international terrorism increases the probability that U.S. sites will be targeted (New York's World Trade Center);

WHEREAS, formal policies and procedures directed to preventing and treating psychological dysfunction resulting from the impact of disasters on children are absent or minimal in the public and private organizations established to provide relief;

WHEREAS, the APA currently has in place collaborative disaster training and intervention activities with some relief organizations (e.g., the Red Cross), and whereas these activities should specifically address children's psychological needs;

WHEREAS, the federal government generally has been slow to provide adequate leadership in the development and application of knowledge about child victims of disaster;

WHEREAS, disaster relief efforts have sometimes failed to ensure the physical and psychological safety of child disaster victims;

WHEREAS, research on the prevention of negative psychological effects and on the treatment of disaster victims has been limited and of varying degrees of methodological soundness—e.g., lacking in control groups, standard instruments, before and after measures—and research on *children's* needs and responses in disasters is particularly scant;

WHEREAS, emerging research establishes the acute short-term and serious long-term negative effects of disasters on children's behavior and mental health as well as on that of their families;

WHEREAS, the positive impact of selected interventions with children and their families exposed to disasters is beginning to emerge through research;

WHEREAS, available research suggests differences related to gender, disability, and family status in children's vulnerability and responses to disasters and many children find ways to cope successfully with a variety of negative situations;

WHEREAS, the significance of race and ethnicity in the prevention and treatment of psychological dysfunction in child disaster victims has not been systematically studied;

WHEREAS, emerging research suggests that children disadvantaged by known risk factors such as poverty, disability, and abuse may be at higher risk for dysfunctional outcomes as a result of exposure to disaster and may also be disproportionately

WHEREAS, the unique features that typify the effects of disasters on children and their families, and on the public institutions that deal with them, create needs for special training of psychologists and other professionals in assessing damage and initiating and evaluating prevention and treatment programs;

WHEREAS, the development and application of knowledge about the impact of disasters on children and their families have been impeded by critical shortages of qualified researchers and mental health practitioners specializing in work on the topic;

WHEREAS, Section I of APA's Division 12 has published an extensive review of the literature, in which they have (a) reviewed the scientific knowledge about (i) the prevention of negative psychological effects of disaster on children, (ii) treatment of disaster-exposed children, (iii) effects of interventions on disaster-exposed children and their families, (b) identified critical gaps in knowledge about the effects of disasters on children and their families, and (c) suggested initiatives to enhance the state of knowledge in this area;

WHEREAS, psychologists have ethical duties to promote human dignity and welfare;

RESOLVED, That the Council of Representatives of the APA finds and declares that the development and implementation of a national strategy to prevent and treat the psychological dysfunction resulting from exposure of children and their families to disasters is a matter of the highest priority, and supports the establishment of policies to maintain their psychological well-being;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Psychological Association:

1) Authorizes the Association's Committee on Children, Youth, and Families to pursue collaborative efforts with Section I of Division 12, Division 16, the Psychology in the Schools Program in the Practice Directorate, and the Association's Disaster Response Network, in view of these groups' expertise and recent work in this area, and other interested, involved entities within the Association to:

- Consider development of guidelines to (a) identify the needs of children and families exposed to disasters, (b) prevent and treat the negative psychological sequelae in children and their families exposed to disasters through interventions shown to be effective through research and clinical knowledge, (c) utilize other psychological experts, committees, divisions, and previously established APA guidelines (e.g., *Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic, and Culturally Diverse Populations* (APA, 1990)) as references and resources, in the formulation of guidelines;

- Explore proposals for other dissemination of psychological knowledge about child disaster victims' needs, as well as possible guidelines, to the organization's state associations, divisions, the membership at large, and national relief organizations (e.g., Red Cross, Salvation Army, FEMA); and to explore proposals for developing public relations campaigns, developed in collaboration with health and relief organizations, summarizing current research and clinical knowledge about the needs of children and families in disaster situations; such campaigns to be adaptable to specific

•Encourage the development of research protocols for implementing empirical investigations of the impact of disasters on children and their families to understand successful coping mechanisms and individual characteristics which lead to excellent long term functioning and to encourage the evaluation of mental health intervention following disasters;

•Explore possible sources for research funding to support such empirical investigations; and

•Select current, quality psychological research and clinical knowledge to be used to explore proposals for a possible national public relations campaign as described herein.

2) Recognizing the interest in the Practice Directorate's Disaster Response Network shown by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration—the federal agency that works with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to ensure that disaster mental health needs are met—will advocate, in consultation with the Practice Directorate, for FEMA or other federal agencies to support the continuing efforts of the federal agencies to maintain their existing information data bank on disasters and encourages expansion to include available resources.

3) In all activities conducted pursuant to this act, due consideration shall be given to the need for cultural competence and appropriate psychological service delivery and research protocols to serve ethnic minority children and their families.

4) In all activities conducted pursuant to this act, due consideration shall be given to the relation of the needs of children exposed to disasters to other social issues, including the status of children, the status of women, the status of ethnic minorities, the status of lesbian and gay families, the status of refugee and immigrant families, the needs of children with disabilities and or experiencing handicapping conditions, the needs of children suffering from abuse and neglect, the effects of poverty, problems of substance abuse, the welfare of families, and cultural beliefs about violence (DeLeon, in press).

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Resolution on Sexuality Education

WHEREAS American youth are exhibiting behavior leading to increasing rates of life-threatening or health-compromising sexually transmitted diseases that in part reflect ignorance of sexual health promoting behaviors (National Guidelines Task Force, 1991);

WHEREAS youth infection with HIV/AIDS has reached an epidemic level, particularly among young gay men and ethnic minority youth (National Commission on AIDS, 1993), in part because of lack of knowledge and lack of training about protective behaviors;

WHEREAS children are becoming involved in sexual activities at younger ages (Ravoira & Cherry, 1992; Singh & Wulf, 1990);

WHEREAS over one million teenage women become pregnant annually (National Guidelines Task Force, 1991) and approximately 300,000 of these teenagers become homeless or runaways or both (Ravoira & Cherry, 1992);

WHEREAS the prevalence of sexual intercourse appears to be higher among youth who did not receive sexuality education (Furstenberg & Crawford, 1986);

WHEREAS youth whose sexual orientation or whose values, beliefs, and practices differ from those deemed acceptable by many in our society are subject to persistent, subtle, or overt harassment and violence which may lead to suicide (Schaecher, 1988);

WHEREAS youth with a physical or mental disability may be more vulnerable to sexual coercion;

WHEREAS stranger rape, date rape, sexual abuse, and other forms of sexual violence are traumatic events that have become increasingly prevalent (Koss et al., 1994);

WHEREAS sexual health, personal self-esteem, and the ability to participate in responsible, caring, and stable relationships, as well as to develop positive interpersonal social attitudes can be promoted through education (Gordon & Schroeder, 1995);

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association has a necessary and important role in influencing public policy to the benefit and protection of youth in particular and the society in general;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the APA supports access to information on sexuality as critical to healthy development. Such information should be positive, age appropriate, and culturally suitable, and should respect the choice of abstinence; it should acknowledge women's rights, should foster shared responsibility among males and females for sexual behaviors, and should promote tolerance for sexual diversity; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that APA public policy support the development and adoption, including research and evaluation, of such comprehensive sexuality education curricula and programs for the promotion of healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors and the prevention and mitigation of endangering and destructive behaviors. It is to be noted that this resolution does not endorse any particular curriculum, procedure, or site for instruction.

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